

The Doctor and His Colleagues

The other day Mr. John M. High-tower of The Associated Press reported that a vital decision in Washington has been made concerning the Central Intelligence Agency. That decision was to remove from CIA the power to arrange any more Cuban debacles.

This newspaper does not like I told you so's any more than the next person does. But a great many people who looked with some askance on CIA's operations over the past few years had predicted that some time, some place, the CIA would fall flat on its cloaks just as it did in Cuba.

It was simply bound to happen. For CIA not only had the responsibility to gather intelligence and counter-intelligence data, it had the responsibility then to assess that data and, worst of all, to act upon the conclusions suggested to CIA from the data it had gathered.

The great danger was that if CIA made one important error in gathering its information, that error was magnified in CIA's assessment. And the error grew in a most geometric proportion when CIA came to formulate plans to act on the erroneous conclusions suggested by the erroneous data.

Clearly, this was not only too much power for one man—and CIA was a one-man organization under Mr. Allen Dulles just as the State Department was a one-man organization under his brother, John Foster Dulles—it was far too dangerous a procedure for any group of men. Doctors do not perform serious operations on their own diagnosis. They always call in colleagues.

Now that is what Senator Mansfield proposes, in a way, the future role of CIA ought to be. Let the cloak-and-dagger operation dig up all the information they can lay their hands upon. But then let someone else assess that information. And let a third party formulate plans the information and its assessment call for.

Actually, CIA's job, if it is to serve this nation well, ought to be restricted just as the Federal Bureau of Investigation is. That particular analogy might be carried even farther.

It might be a good idea for President Kennedy to borrow Mr. J. Edgar Hoover and let him set CIA on the proper path. Mr. Hoover has been fighting communism and subversion, as well as crime, for a long time now on the domestic scene. He could certainly have a lot of advice to offer on the international scene.